WILLIAMS, BARNEY (noted Irish actor)

71 2009.075.03938

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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Barney Williams

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

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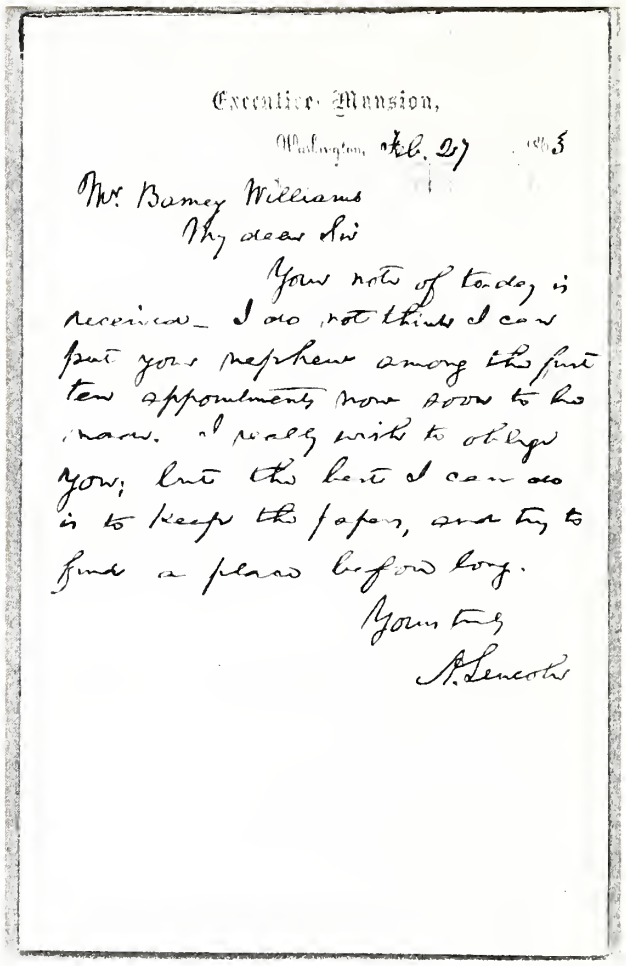

Executive Mansion,

Washington, Feb. 27 1863

Mr. Barney Williams

My dear Sir

Your note of today is received. I do not think I can put your nephew among the first ten appointments now soon to be made. I really wish to oblige you; but the best I can do is to keep the papers, and try to find a place before long.

Your truly

A. Lincoln

29. **LINCOLN, ABRAHAM** President.

Autograph Letter Signed as President, 8vo, Executive Mansion, Washington, February 27, 1863. To Barney Williams, noted Irish actor.

"Your note of today is received. I do not think I can put your nephew among the first ten appointments now soon to be made. I really wish to oblige you; but the best I can do is to keep the papers, and try to find a place before long..."

A docket on the back of the integral leaf written and signed by Barney Williams indicates that the request was for James D. J. Kelly to be appointed a midshipman. Both Kelly and Williams are represented by considerable articles in Dictionary of American Biography, wherein Kelly is credited with being the last Naval Academy appointment made by Lincoln. Thereafter he enjoyed a dual career as naval officer, rising to Commander in the Spanish American War, and as an author. An accomplished yachtsman, he wrote on that subject as well as on general naval matters.

Barney Williams, evidently his uncle, was known for his rollicking appearances in Irish plays. He toured the country with his wife, actress and singer Maria Pray. Born in Ireland but raised in Manhattan, his real name was Bernard Flaherty. Early in his theatrical career he also appeared in blackface minstrels. It seems very likely that Lincoln would have recognized his name; in fact, it appears on an undated list, perhaps of appointments, in Lincoln's hand (The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Roy P. Basler, editor, Volume VII, page 424).

This strongly penned letter is slightly affected by a light mark around its edges caused by previous framing, and has some repair, but in general is quite satisfactory. It is published in Basler, Volume VI, page 120. 16,500.00

Joseph Rubinfine